SOME THOUGHTS ON THE COMMON METHOD OF EDUCATION IN Publick Schools.

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TO THE

RIGHT WORSHIPFUL

THE

MAYOR,

And the reſt of the

MEMBERS of the CORPORATION

OF THE

CITY of *BRISTOL*,

Guardians and Governours

OF THE

Publick Grammar-School

In This CITY,

THESE THOUGHTS

Are moſt humbly INSCRIBED

By their obliged humble Servants,

The MASTERS of the School.

THE

MAYOR,

OF THE

CITY

OF

THREE THOUSAND.

Some THOUGHTS, &c.

THAT EDUCATION in *publick Schools* every Day declines, and *private Seminaries* of Learning are preferr'd to PUBLICK FOUNDATIONS, are ſuch apparent Truths, as ſeem to need no particular Inſtances to confirm them. Perſons, who have the Care of Publick Places of Inſtruction, are obliged to do all they can to render ſuch Inſtitutions as uſeful as poſſible; and yet it is to be fear'd they themſelves have, tho' undeſignedly, contributed to the Diſrepute they are in, by too ſtrict an Attachment to the *old* Method of Inſtruction. They have not Reſolution enough to endeavour to make Learning eaſier to the Capacities of Children, and ſo load them with unneceſſary Burthens, becauſe

becauſe they themſelves may have been thus loaded before them.

SINCE then there are ſeveral Objections very juſtly made to the uſual Method of Education in Publick Schools, we intend impartially to conſider them, and as much as in Us lies, to remove the Cauſe of them, by correcting ſome Errors, and improving the *old* Plan, or rather by ſubſtituting a *new* one in its Room.——There are two popular Objections which well deſerve to be conſider'd;

Firſt, That the Education in Publick Schools is too contracted;

Secondly, That the preſent Method of teaching the Languages is neither expeditious nor ſucceſsful.

Firſt, THAT the preſent Method of Education in publick Schools is generally thought too contracted, is evident, as well from the Sentiments of thoſe, who have already wrote on the Subject, as from the prevailing Taſte of

of the preſent Times. Moſt Parents are fond of ſending their Sons to Academies with a View of procuring for them more univerſal Knowledge in all Parts of ~~mere~~ polite Literature. But it is much to be ſuſpected, theſe Advantages very often exiſt only in Imagination. Youth in theſe Academies may learn the Arts of *Fencing* and *Dancing*, and be taught other faſhionable Accompliſhments, and yet employ ſo little of their Time to improve themſelves in more uſeful Arts and Sciences, as to come from them with a very ſmall Stock of ſolid Learning, and with a very ſlender Acquiſition of any Knowledge which may be of real Service to them.—— Indeed the learned Languages are ſo generally diſregarded, that even amongſt Men of Quality and Figure in the World, too many Parents make it no Part of their Care to have their Sons inſtructed in them. What ſhould occaſion this Contempt, we do not pretend to determine; however, it may be preſum'd, not only that ſuch a Prejudice is ill founded, but that a Knowledge of the Languages is ornamental and uſeful in every Station of Life. They are Neceſſary to the learned

learned Profeſſions, and may be of Uſe to Men in buſy Life; at leaſt it is a graceful and a commendable Accompliſhment in every Man to be able to converſe out of the Circle of his own particular Buſineſs, and to ſpend ſome of his leiſure Hours, which otherwiſe may be mis-employ'd, in examining the Stores of ancient Learning, which will abundantly repay his Care and Diligence. Relaxation from Buſineſs hath its Advantages; but to employ that Time in improving the Mind, is not only a profitable, but likewiſe a very entertaining Amuſement: And why ſhould a Merchant confine all his Thoughts to one Province only, and not deem it an Excellence to converſe with inquiſitive, and learned Men?—Perhaps it may be ſaid, (and that with too much Reaſon) that the general Cuſtom of keeping Boys chiefly for the two or three firſt Years in *Lilly*'s Grammar, may in ſome Meaſure have occaſion'd the Diſrepute of Publick Schools. By which Means, as their Acquaintance with the *Latin* Language hath been ſo ſmall, a very little Abſence obliterates all they have learn'd; therefore they appear to have loſt that Time, which, if properly

properly employ'd might have ſerved to give them a Taſte for Reading, and initiate them in ſuch uſeful Knowledge as might more nearly concern them.

But to give the Objection before Us, the Weight it deſerves, we readily allow, that the preſent Method of Education in publick Schools, is too contracted. —— To learn a dead Language is in itſelf a dry and inſipid Work, and conſequently cannot but be diſagreeable to the active Spirits, and ſprightly Genius of Youth. Beſides, as their Reaſon at this Age begins to open, and employ itſelf on proper and ſuitable Objects, it is an unreaſonable Reſtraint on their inquiſitive Minds, and a fooliſh Impoſition to confine them to a Syſtem of abſtruſe Grammatical Rules, a Set of unintelligible Words, and technical Terms, which appear to them as difficult as the Language they are taught in; when it is poſſible, they might ſometimes be entertain'd with Purſuits much more engaging, and be inſenſibly introduc'd into the learned Languages, without being diſcouraged by the apparent Diffi-

culty of attaining them.——*Hiſtory* and the eaſieſt Parts of *Geography* are adapted to the Capacities of Boys, and may ſerve to open their Minds and exerciſe their Memories, and be very conveniently annex'd to any other Part of School-Learning. And it is not unlikely that theſe Studies may remove the Prejudices, they are too apt to conceive, and make them in Love with that, which it may be much to their Advantage to purſue.——It requires no great Skill, and therefore can be no great Difficulty for a Boy eight or nine Years old, to read the Hiſtory of his own Country, and be taught to trace out every Part of it on a Map; and ſo, as he grows in Years, and improves in Underſtanding, be furniſh'd with a more extenſive Acquaintance with *Hiſtorical* and *Geographical* Learning.—Thus the Manners, Cuſtoms, and Situation of Places both ancient and modern will become familiar to him, and having in this Manner regularly gone through the ſeveral Claſſes in a School, he would be qualified to ſpeak pertinently in an ingenious and manly Converſation. To which may be added, that he may very agreeably entertain himſelf in

this Way at his leiſure Intervals both in and out of School; and an Hour or two every Day employ'd in ſuch ſort of Exerciſe will be of more real Uſe to him, than being wholly converſant for Years in the *Latin* Syntax, or the Excellence of repeating every Rule in it; eſpecially if it be admitted (and there is no Reaſon why it ſhould not) that all the neceſſary Rules of Grammar may be convey'd to him in his Mother-Tongue, much ſooner, with greater Eaſe, and more to his Advantage.

It is an Obſervation no leſs true than common, that the *Engliſh* Tongue is too much neglected in our publick Schools, and that Boys are neither taught to read it juſtly, nor to ſpeak it properly. This Defect owes its Riſe to a Notion that theſe Schools were calculated only for the learned Languages, and that it is beneath the Character of a Maſter of a Grammar School, to teach Boys their Mother-Tongue. But certainly this is a Miſtake; for, as it is the Language we converſe in, and tranſact all our Affairs, ſo it ought to be a great Part of a Maſter's Care to make his Scholars perfect in it.——To ſpeak and to

write well in our own Language, are Qualifications not to be attain'd without Pains and Aſſiduity; and therefore an early Acquaintance with the beſt *Engliſh* Authors is abſolutely neceſſary to this Purpoſe, as it is the moſt likely Method of conducing to theſe Attainments. Boys will naturally adopt the Stile of the Books they read, and thus be ſecur'd from that awkward Manner of expreſſing themſelves, which is too often met with among Men that have had a mere Grammar-Education.——It is in no wiſe contrary to the Intention of a *Grammar-School*, nor inconſiſtent with the Office of a Maſter, to ſuperintend this uſeful Part of Education; and ſome Portion of a good *Engliſh* Author read, or repeated every Day before him, will be ſo far from being an Impediment to Boys in any other Part of Learning, that it may facilitate it, and give them withall ſuch a Propriety and Juſtneſs of ſpeaking, ſuch Perſpicuity and Elegance of writing, as may recommend them to Men of Senſe, Ingenuity and Taſte.—— Therefore, as a juſt *reading* of Engliſh calls for our Regard, no leſs Care ſhould be taken that they *write* it properly. How wretchedly

faulty

faulty not only Boys, but Men are in *Orthography*, is too notorious to need any Proof, and therefore it becomes quite neceſſary, that ſome Meaſures be taken to ſupply this Deficiency as early as may be. Boys by tranſcribing ſome uſeful Paſſages out of *Engliſh* Authors, and having the Errors in their own Compoſitions pointed out to them, may arrive to ſuch a Perfection as to make it a Sort of Difficulty to them either to ſpell wrong, or to write improperly.—How mean ſoever this Office may appear, and whatever Shew of Learning and Importance it may have, wholly to be employ'd in teaching the *Latin* and *Greek* Tongues, yet the Advantages of reading, ſpeaking, and writing Engliſh correctly, are ſo conſiderable, that they will always ſecure the Maſter from Contempt, and be a valuable and laſting Accquiſition to the Scholar; eſpecially when we conſider, (as we obſerv'd before) that this may be attain'd without any Prejudice to his Grammar-Learning, and may be a Means of ſmoothing the rugged Path of School-Education.—The *Epiſtolary* Way of writing is what moſt Men have Occaſion for, and to excell in it, is no

ſmall

ſmall Qualification; why then may not a Set of ingenious Letters be put into the Hands of Boys for their Imitation, and a Correſpondence eſtabliſh'd between half a Dozen or more of them in a Claſs, to give each other an Account every Week of the little Occurrences they meet with, and the Obſervations they may make upon them? This naturally will engage them to obſerve Things more attentively than they uſually do; will probably lead them to write clearly, and eaſily on any Subject; will be a Means of diſcovering their Genius, and give them an Opportunity of employing their Reaſon. As they advance in the School, theſe Exerciſes may be continued alternately in *Latin* and *Engliſh*, and upon Subjects more intereſting.

ANOTHER Defect very juſtly complain'd of by ſerious Perſons, is the Want of *religious* Education in the Method now uſed in publick Schools: giving Boys a Notion of *Religion*, and making them acquainted with the *Holy Scriptures*, ſeldom coming into the Account of what they are to learn there. To this univerſal Neglect may be owing that Degeneracy

of

of Manners and the too prevailing Mode of vilifying ſacred Truths, which are ſeen in too many of thoſe, that otherwiſe have had a liberal Education.

"To inſtill the Principles of Honeſty and "Probity into Youth, is highly valuable and "neceſſary, but yet not ſo eſſential as it is to "make them Chriſtians. Religion therefore "ſhould be the Thing aimed at in all our "Endeavours, and the End of all our In"ſtructions. Tho' it be not conſtantly in our "Mouths, it ſhould be always in our Minds, "and never out of Sight." * —— Nothing therefore can be more abſurd, than that a Maſter of a School, and he generally a Chriſtian Divine, ſhould have a Set of Boys for ſeven Years under his Care, and yet never inſtruct them in the Principles of Chriſtianity, never give them a Taſte for reading their Bible. ——

We are oblig'd to convey to Boys, the Purity and Elegance of the learned Languages through Channels full of the Abſurdities and

* Rollin, Bell. Lett. Vol. I. Part I.

Super-

Superſtition of Heathen Theology; Books full of the Vices and Immoralities of their fictitious Deities; and it may be, that theſe Things ſtrike their Imaginations deeper than we ſuſpect; ſo that the Morality and Virtue of the greateſt Heathens may leſs affect their Minds, than the Amours and Adulteries of their Gods. Upon which Account, they ought to read profane Authors with great Caution, and their Thoughts ſhould be call'd off, as much as poſſible, from thoſe Fables, which may raiſe in them Ideas unbecoming Religion, and inconſiſtent with Virtue. To which End no better Expedient can be uſed, than to oblige them frequently to read the Scriptures, "as the Principles they may de-"rive from thence will be of Uſe to correct "abundance of Things, that occur to them in "the Works of profane Authors; will guard "them againſt the Errors of Superſtition, and "be an aſſured Guide, through ſuch a Mix-"ture of Light and Darkneſs." *——To which might be annex'd once in the Week, ſome practical Expoſitions of the Catechiſm, and other eaſy Tracts, explaining the Principles

* Rollin ut ſupra

of

of the Chriſtian Religion; that being furniſh'd with a Stock of ſuch Knowledge, as will prevent any ill Impreſſions on their Minds, they may gain the Reputation of *Scholars*, and yet not loſe the Title of *Chriſtians*.

And here it were to be wiſh'd, that ſome able Hand (if it is not already done) would collect out of the pureſt *Latin* and *Greek* Fathers, ſome of their Apologies in Defence of Chriſtianity, and regularly digeſt them into a ſmall Volume, or Volumes, to be read in Schools; that when Boys are well grounded in the Chriſtian Faith, they may more ſafely be truſted with the Claſſic Authors, and better qualified to diſcover the Folly and Superſtition of Heathen Theology. For it is not only a wrong, but a cruel Cuſtom, to give them the firſt Tincture of Religion from that Fountain of Errors, which perhaps no Application afterwards may be able to remove.——In proceeding thus we ſhall be able to form our Youth more upon the *Chriſtian Model*, than is uſually done; and have this additional Advantage as a Conſequence of it, that when they are once made truly ſenſible of their

Duty to God, they will become more tractable to learn every Thing elſe, that may be ſerviceable, and ornamental to them in Life. The *Bible* contains in it every Thing that can make us wiſe and happy, and ſince it was *written for our Admonition*, ſhould by no Means be omitted in the Education of Youth.

Perhaps it would be more popular to talk of *Virtue*, *Honour*, and what the World calls *Moral Honeſty*; but, as theſe are mere Names unleſs founded on *Religion*; and as *Chriſtianity* contains the neceſſary Articles of *Faith*, as well as the moſt efficacious Motives to bring all the *moral* Virtues to *Perfection*, we hope we may be excus'd for inſiſting upon it as neceſſary for Youth to be inſtructed in its Principles; becauſe for want of ſuch Sort of Inſtruction, we have in a Mannner loſt every Thing but the *Name* of Chriſtians among Us. ——Having thus laid the Foundation in *Religion*, as they riſe in the School, they may be made acquainted with the civil and religious Antiquities of *Greece* and *Rome*, by which Means they will be able to read the Claſſic Authors

Authors with more Profit, and with greater Pleaſure.

Secondly, A ſecond Objection, is that the preſent Method of teaching the Languages is neither *expeditious* nor always *ſucceſsful*; and that it is a tedious Impoſition to keep Boys for the two or three firſt Years in *Lilly*'s Grammar, before they are entred into any other Book. But this hath long ſince been in part altered, and Boys much earlier than formerly have been initiated into the *Latin* Language. ——The *Rudiments* or *Principles* of *Grammar*, are abſolutely neceſſary; but as it is an Abſurdity to teach Boys the Principles of a Language in the Words of the Language itſelf, ſo theſe Principles ought to be given them in their own Tongue, and be made as plain to them as poſſible.—— There is no doubt, but a Boy who hath been well grounded in the Declenſions of Nouns, and Conjugations of Verbs, may be able to decline any Noun, and conjugate any Verb; and when he is once acquainted with the neceſſary Rules of Syntax in *Engliſh*, there can be no Reaſon,

why he ſhould not begin with ſome eaſy *Latin* Book, with the Help of a literal Tranſlation; and after he has acquir'd ſome Knowledge of the Language, then it may be Time enough to teach him the *Latin* Syntax; which he will have the leſs Difficulty to learn, by having before-hand been taught the neceſſary Rules in his native Language. This is the Method of teaching *French* and other modern Languages; and Youth learn the *Greek* Tongue by the Help of a *Latin* Grammar, which they are ſuppos'd to underſtand; whilſt Children are forced to drudge in a Set of Words and Phraſes much beyond their Capacities, and which only ſerve to create in them an obſtinate Prejudice againſt the Language, and the School where they are taught.

It hath been ſaid in Excuſe of ſuch a Practice, that Boys eight Years old, are only capable of Words, and that by being thus employ'd in their younger Years, they will ſtock their Memories with a Set of Words, which may be of great Service to them when they know how to uſe them.——But certainly the former Part of this Obſervation is falſe; be-

becauſe it may be prov'd by Experience, that the Capacities of Children of that Age may extend to Things as well as Words, being ſuſceptible of Impreſſions from Hiſtory, Geography, *&c.*—— Beſides, if it be neceſſary to treaſure up Words in the Memory at this Age, thoſe technical Terms in the *Latin* Syntax are certainly the worſt that could be thought of for this Purpoſe; many of the Expreſſions being harſh and unclaſſical; and it would be much more to the Advantage of Boys (if they muſt be furniſh'd with Words) that they be made to repeat every Day ſome Lines out of a good Claſſic, from which they might have a Collection of elegant Expreſſions to uſe hereafter, as they ſhould have Opportunity.

AGAIN:—What Reaſon can be given that Boys ſhould be made *Proficients* in Grammar immediately upon their Entrance into School? GRAMMAR, except its fundamental Rules, is a nice and learned Criticiſm upon a Language, conſequently not adapted to the Capacities of Children; and therefore it is impoſſible they ſhould be Critics in that, which they

they can know but little, or nothing of. Let them firſt learn the *Language*, and then be inſtructed in the *critical Rules* of *Grammar*. ——It is neceſſary, no doubt, that they ſhould be well grounded in the *Principles* of a Language, before they can proceed in it to any Advantage: But this doth not conſiſt in a critical Examination of its conſtituent Parts, or nice Scrutiny of that infinite Variety of Rules and Exceptions which abound in Grammar. This is a Work which ought to be reſerv'd for future Time, when Boys know more of the Language, and may be ſuppos'd to be capable of underſtanding the Criticiſms made upon it. But to *begin* with this, would be as abſurd as to call the *Order*, *Proportion*, and *Harmony* of every Part of an Edifice, Laying a good Foundation. ——Boys then ſhould be made throughly acquainted with the Formation of Nouns and Verbs, ſo as to be able at firſt Sight to tell what Voice, Mood, Tenſe, and Perſon a Verb is of; and of what Gender, Number and Caſe, a Noun, and to what Declenſion it belongs. Then they may be taught the Nature of the three Concords, and the Government of

Verbs,

Verbs, Adjectives and Subſtantives. When they are perfect in this, they may be introduc'd into an eaſy *Latin* Author with a Tranſlation; and occaſionally, as Inſtances occur in their Reading, be inſtructed in other Grammar Rules. This will render the Language leſs difficult, and prevent that tedious Trouble of turning over a Dictionary upon every Occaſion. And this, we apprehend, may be done by Boys of tolerable Parts in ſix or nine Months at moſt, and at the ſame Time improve themſelves in their *Mother-Tongue*, and then be led on to *Hiſtory* and *Geography*.

THESE are the Things which have occurr'd to Us on this Subject, and which we ſubmit to the Conſideration of the Publick, and more particularly to the Wiſdom and Judgement of the *Governors* of the School. Upon this Plan we intend to proceed for the future, in order to make this publick Foundation more univerſally uſeful.—We hope that by laying the Foundation in *Religion*, the Superſtructure will be ſtrong, laſting, and ornamental, and the Inſtructions, which Boys ſhall receive

ceive here, may be a Means of rendring them hereafter *loyal Subjects*, *uſeful Citizens*, and *good Chriſtians*. At leaſt as this Scheme is calculated principally with a View of being inſtrumental to the Publick Good, ſo, if it ſucceed not, we flatter ourſelves, we ſhall not be the leſs eſteem'd by candid Judges, and that the Honeſty of the Deſign will prevent Us any other Diſadvantage but that of being diſappointed. If it meet with Approbation, we ſhall be glad, that we have in any Meaſure contributed to make Learning more *generally* purſued, by being rendred more eaſy, and therefore more agreeable to tender Minds.

F I N I S.